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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Mighty God, whose ears are attentive to our prayers, we acknowledge that You are the source of all goodness. Lord, the world belongs to You, for You laid the Earth's foundation and built it on the ocean's depths. Bring peace to our world, particularly in Ukraine. Give wisdom to our world leaders so that they will fulfill Your purposes for peace in our world.

We praise You because of Your strength and might. You are invincible in battle, and our times are in Your hands.

Lord, we trust You with our future, offering this prayer in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

AMERICA CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANUFACTURING, PRE-EMINENCE IN TECHNOLOGY, AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH ACT OF 2022—Resumed

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4521, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4521) to provide for a coordinated Federal research initiative to ensure continued United States leadership in engineering biology.

Pending:

Schumer Amendment No. 5002, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer Amendment No. 5003 (to Amendment No. 5002), to change the enactment date.

Schumer Amendment No. 5004 (to Amendment No. 5003), to change the enactment date.

Schumer Amendment No. 5005 (to the language proposed to be stricken by Amendment No. 5002), to change the enactment date.

Schumer Amendment No. 5006 (to Amendment No. 5005), to change the enactment date.

Schumer motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with instructions to report back forthwith, Schumer Amendment No. 5007, to change the enactment date.

Schumer Amendment No. 5008 (to the instructions of the motion to commit (Amendment No. 5007), to change the enactment date.

Schumer Amendment No. 5009 (to Amendment No. 5008), to change the enactment date.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

Mr. McCONNELL. President Biden likes to say, and has said again today, that budgets are statements of values. Indeed, they can be, and the White House budget request that President Biden published today offers the clearest possible reminder that the Biden administration's far-left values are fundamentally disconnected from what American families actually need.

I mentioned around President Biden's State of the Union that the speech gave the President a chance to pivot. He has had a chance to assess the poll numbers, read the tea leaves, and make a dramatic course correction back toward where Americans would like for him to be. But he chose not to, and this budget proposal is just the mathematical version of that failure to pivot.

The White House is desperately spinning to call this budget centrist, but there is nothing remotely moderate about what is in it.

First and foremost, at a dangerous time, the President's budget falls woefully short on defense spending. Our Commander in Chief has again failed to budget for the resources that our Armed Forces actually need. The Biden administration proposes a nominal 4-percent increase for defense over the bipartisan bill Congress just passed for this year.

That is a nominal 4-percent increase before any of the Democrats' historic inflation is taken into account, and inflation right now is about twice that. So even if you accept the White House's rosiest predictions about where inflation is headed, this would amount to flat-funding defense, with none of the robust growth we need to keep pace with Russia and China. Even in the best case scenario for their budget, it

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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would leave our Armed Forces simply treading water.

And what if Democrats' historic inflation does not plummet downward as quickly as they would like? What if the inflation they have caused keeps sticking around? Then, President Biden's budget would actually cut funding for our Armed Forces in real dollars.

Look, the world is a dangerous place and growing more dangerous by the day. Putin's escalation in Europe has created significant new requirements for the Pentagon and our defense industrial base. We have growing threats from Iran. China is pouring money into high-tech weapons systems. Beijing announced that they are increasing defense spending again this year by more than 7 percent.

So, amid all this, the White House has proposed no meaningful increase in resources for protecting innocent Americans, promoting our interests, supporting our partners, assisting Ukraine, or replenishing our stockpiles. President Biden likes to give speeches about the need for American leadership in the world, but when the rubber meets the road, when it is time to invest so we can rise and meet challenges like Russia and China, this President has, again, decided to do exactly the opposite. Putin and Xi will sleep more soundly at night if the Biden administration gets its way on defense funding than if Republicans get ours.

Now, let's look at the places where President Biden does want to pull out all the stops and hand out massive funding increases. Our Armed Forces may get the short end of the stick from this White House, but plenty, plenty of far-left domestic priorities will be literally swimming in cash.

While they limit defense to 4 percent growth before inflation, nondefense spending would get a significantly larger increase—not all of domestic spending however. Border security and the Department of Homeland Security barely tread water, just like our troops. But other Agencies and Departments that are more useful for the far-left agenda, like the IRS, the EPA, Commerce, HUD, and Labor make out like bandits with gigantic—gigantic—increases of 20 and 30 percent since 2021.

They want to pour money into absurdities like the U.N. Green Climate Fund—borrow from China to fund a global bureaucracy that will hand free money back to China. There is plenty of money for things like antigen regulations, free lawyers for illegal immigrants, and something called "environmental justice."

This whole far-left feast leaves out the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Democrats failed to pass last year and are now trying to revive. The Biden administration still wants all that spending, too, but they couldn't even budget for it honestly.

And all of the bloated liberal nonsense comes paired with the biggest tax

hike in American history—a 2.5-plus-trillion-dollar bomb of tax hikes dropped on top of an economy that the Democrats' policies have already hurt badly, literally—literally—the largest tax hike in history.

Among those increases, President Biden wants to use colossal tax hikes to punish domestic producers of American energy. World events are reminding us every day how important American oil and natural gas production is for our national security and for our partners, but President Biden would rather grind his ideological ax and escalate his holy war on "Made in America" fossil fuels.

This—this—is the budget request of an administration that is completely disconnected from reality, of a President who has decided not to pivot, of a Democratic Party that has chosen not to correct course on its own.

Every data point suggests that the American people want and need a major course correction. It appears that in about 7 months, they may have to provide it themselves.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, held its hearing on the nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to serve as Associate Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

It was an opportunity to learn a lot about her: her qualifications, her experience, her approach to cases, her judicial temperament, and her temperament before the committee.

She proved to the public what many of us suspected and some knew: She is, without a doubt, ready to serve on the Supreme Court.

I have spoken before about Judge Jackson's background and qualifications, but some of it bears repeating because this is the critical week before we consider her nomination next week on the floor of the Senate.

She is the daughter of two school teachers, public school teachers. Judge Jackson discovered her passion for the law at the age of 4. See, her dad decided to give up teaching. He had another profession in mind; he was going to become a lawyer. And so he would sit at the kitchen table with his law books all stacked up, and Judge Jackson, at the age of 4, would gather her coloring books and sit next to her daddy. She was going to study too.

She believes that might have been the first time that she thought seriously about becoming a lawyer.

After graduating from public high school in Miami—she had distinguished herself as president of the student body

and as the lead on the high school speech and debate team. She competed nationally successfully and visited the campus of Harvard University. She loved it. She decided that she was going to apply to go to school there.

When she went back to her high school in Florida, she sat down with her counselor to talk about that option. The counselor discouraged her; she was aiming too high. But she did it anyway, and she was accepted and then went on to Harvard Law School.

She has clerked at every level of the Federal judiciary. If you are not a lawyer, that may not mean much; but if you are a lawyer, it is a big deal. To think that she started off at the lowest Federal district court level clerking for a judge, then was accepted to move up a level to the circuit judge position to serve as a clerk as well, and then to finally grab the gold ring of being a Supreme Court clerk to none other than Justice Stephen Breyer whose vacancy she is hoping to fill.

She worked in private practice as a lawyer, and she proved that she was a consensus builder all the way along. On the bench, she served as a district court judge and now circuit court in the DC Circuit.

It is no surprise that she has won the admiration and friendship of so many people throughout her career. In fact, she has come before the same Senate Judiciary Committee on three separate occasions with her background carefully reviewed and emerged with the approval of the committee with bipartisan support.

In fact, when you look at it, if you watched last week's hearing before the Judiciary Committee, no one questioned her qualifications, her knowledge, her experience. She really has a platinum resume when it comes to that.

On the final day of the hearing, the committee heard from Anne Williams. Anne Williams is well-known to the Presiding Officer as well as to myself. She served as a district court judge in the Northern District of Illinois and then as a circuit judge on the Seventh Circuit. I believe she was the first African-American woman to do so.

She is retired at this point, but she has volunteered with the American Bar Association to do the careful review of Judge Jackson to make certain that we know every comment that has been made by professionals who have been familiar with her work experience.

Judge Williams is an anomaly politically. Those who are looking for evidence as to whether she is Democrat or Republican, she was initially appointed to the district court by President Reagan and then to the circuit court by President Clinton—a bipartisan nominee all the way.

She came to report to the committee that Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, who had been reviewed with careful personal interviews of 250 separate individuals in her legal career, had emerged unanimously well-qualified to serve on the Supreme Court.

Judge Williams said that in interviewing these lawyers and judges, they asked the hard questions—the ones that you can ask in confidence and in private—and the answers were all the same.

Judge Jackson has a career that has distinguished her as outstanding, excellent, superior, superb, the list of accolades went on and on. The ABA found that Judge Jackson has a sterling reputation for thoughtfulness and collegiality and exceptional competence.

I also asked Judge Williams, serving as the spokesperson for the ABA, to comment on the allegations that Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is somehow soft on crime. It is a common mantra coming from the other side of the aisle. And I said, in the course of asking 250 different judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and all the people who worked with and around her, Was there any evidence that she was soft on crime? No. None. None. That is amazing when you think that is the No. 1 talking point against her from the Republican side of the aisle. “None whatsoever” is exactly what Judge Williams said. Another ABA witness, Jean Veta, said that the ABA “heard consistently from not only defense counsel, but [from] prosecutors” of how unbiased Judge Jackson was throughout her career.

And just as impressive as her qualifications was her performance and candor before the Senate Judiciary Committee. If you ask her a question about stare decisis, she will start responding by defining it in plain English, just to make sure everybody at home, lawyer or nonlawyer, can follow along. She expresses her thinking with surgeon-like precision, which I am sure her husband, Dr. Patrick Johnson, who is an actual surgeon at Georgetown University Hospital, deeply admires. Clarity and impartiality, that is Judge Jackson.

During the hearing, several of my colleagues asked her to describe her judicial philosophy. Pick a label: Are you an originalist; are you a textualist; are you a liberal; are you a conservative? Previous Supreme Court nominees like Chief Justice Roberts have said that they do not have an “overarching judicial philosophy” that they bring to a case.

That was a good enough answer for many Republicans if it was given by Chief Justice Roberts or Justice Amy Coney Barrett, but they have complained now that she just won’t come up and admit to a label.

She did us one better. She gave a thorough, step-by-step explanation of how she decided a case—every case—and she has some 580 separate written opinions. You don’t need an electron microscope to find this judge’s judicial philosophy. She has written it down and published it over and over and over again.

She established her independence, she says, by “clearing [her] mind of any preconceived notions” when she gets a case, sets aside her personal

views, evaluates the facts, listens to the arguments, and then she interprets and applies the law, keeping in mind the limits of judicial authority.

What I have just described is what she told the committee, and it is exactly what we look for and should look for in every judge. I can’t recall ever hearing a nominee give such a clear and thorough explanation of their approach to deciding a case. And Judge Jackson’s evenhanded record on so many different issues—criminal law, labor relations, executive power—shows that it works.

Finally, the Judiciary Committee hearing allowed the public to observe Judge Jackson’s incredible judicial temperament. We spend a lot of time as Senators with the authority under the Constitution to advise and consent, interviewing nominees for courts, trying to determine just what kind of a judge they will be. What will their temperament be? Will they be all swollen and big-headed over this black robe and lifetime appointment, or will they remember the real-life experiences that many people in their courtroom have lived through?

Well, I can tell you, Judge Jackson’s temperament has shown through. Frankly, she was tested time and time again. You see, I might just go out on a limb and tell you: There are some Senators that don’t show a very good temperament themselves under these circumstances. And they tested her over and over and over again with baseless, wild charges, some of which were just offensive on their face.

I listened to those, and I would look up and think, if she stands up at this point and says, “That’s enough. I am taking my family, and I’m going home,” nobody would have faulted her for it—some of the questioning was just that bad—but she didn’t.

My Republican colleagues promised a fair and respectful hearing. The majority of them, starting with Senator GRASSLEY, did just that; and I commended them for it today in the committee. They set an example of a minority party with a Supreme Court nominee and how the questioning should come down. Unfortunately, others, however, on that side of the table did not.

But in the face of the constant badgering and interruptions, offensive insinuations by a select few Republicans, Judge Jackson never lost her composure—never. She was patient, calm, and dignified.

Many times, the questions were so mean-spirited. And I thought, there sits her husband and her daughter listening to these charges on how she is soft on crime and doesn’t care about the plight of children. And when you think about that, what they must think of to hear those things said about the doctor’s wife and the kid’s mother. It is just hard to take.

She was patient and kind. She didn’t lose her temper at one time. Some of my colleagues attended the commit-

tee’s hearing intent on tearing her down. It didn’t work. Instead, she showed America that she can rise to any challenge as a Justice on the Supreme Court.

And despite some of my colleagues’ behavior in the committee hearings, last week was an inspiration for so many people across this country. I invited law students from Howard University and my alma mater Georgetown Law to come over and sit through the hearing. We invited interns from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. They wanted to be there at this history-making moment.

They watched her prove that through hard work, a commitment to the law, and in the words of Senator BOOKER, her grit and grace, she has earned a seat on the highest Court in the land.

I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take a look at this woman and what she will bring to the Court.

It is time, America, after all these years, never having had an African-American woman serve on the Court. It has got to be a challenge to find somebody who is ready to take on the job and take on the challenge. She can meet that challenge and will successfully. She is the best and deserves our support.

REMEMBERING MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

On another topic, Madam President, last week, America and the world lost another trailblazing woman and defender of justice and democracy—and a friend.

Madeleine Korbelt Albright came to the United States at age 11 as a refugee. Her family had been driven out of their native Czechoslovakia twice by murderous regimes, in 1938 by the Nazis and 10 years later by the communists.

Those searing childhood upheavals helped to produce in this young woman a lifelong vigilance against dictators and a fierce commitment to democracy.

Her father had been a diplomat who received political asylum in America. Like nearly all immigrants and refugees who come to this country fleeing the tyranny of autocracy, he was keenly aware that this was a land of freedom. He told his daughter many times, “Americans don’t know how fragile their democracy is—and how resilient it is.”

She also knew persistent autocracy. It can rise at any age in any nation. We see it today in the leadership of Russia. That is why we must protect the rule of law, the most potent defense against dictators.

In 1997, she made history. She became America’s first woman Secretary of State under President Clinton, previously serving as our Nation’s Ambassador to the United Nations. She was a hardline critic of tyrants and despots who advocated the policy of assertive multilateralism, and she called the United States “the indispensable nation.”

She believed that the best hope for a free and peaceful world lay in America, exercising leadership and working with the family of Democratic nations to protect democracy, just as we are today in Ukraine.

She was deeply committed to NATO. As Secretary of State, she supported NATO expansion to include Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic—three nations that lived under the boot heel of Soviet oppression. Today, all three nations are providing a haven for Ukrainian civilians, mostly women and children, who are fleeing Putin's unprovoked and barbaric war on that young democracy.

Madeleine Albright understood that any democracy could fall victim to the siren song of autocracy if its citizens were not vigilant. After her historic career in public service, she was chair of an organization called the National Democratic Institute, helping young democracies build independent court systems and a vibrant civil society.

She spoke to me about this important work and understood that for democracies to endure, they must offer more than promises. In one of her last interviews, Madeleine Albright offered a warning that we in this Senate should be wise to remember. She said:

What is important is that democracy has to deliver. People want to vote and eat. And therefore it is very important for democracies, and certainly for the world's oldest, to understand the rule of law—because corruption is the cancer of democracy . . . The people need to be the beneficiaries of [democracy].

Likely because of her family's own experience with fleeing tyranny, Madeleine Albright was quicker than many at recognizing dictators when she saw them. She first met Vladimir Putin in the year 2000, 1 year after his meteoric rise from a mid-level, mediocre KGB apparatchik to President of the Russian Federation. She recorded her first impressions of Vladimir Putin over 20 years ago. She wrote:

Putin is small and pale, so cold as to be almost reptilian.

She went on to note presciently that Putin was "embarrassed about what happened to his country and determined to restore its greatness."

The violence and destruction that Vladimir Putin is willing to wage in pursuit of this delusion to make Russia great again is now horrifyingly obvious to the entire world.

Let me say at the outset: I have no quarrel with the people of Russia. They are good people and have a great history. There were chapters in there that were oppressive and terrible to their neighbors and the countries that suffered under Stalin and the reach of the Soviet Union. But at their heart, I believe the Russians are good people. Sadly, I cannot say the same about their leader.

The brutal assault on Ukraine is now in its second month. Yesterday, at the water tower in downtown Chicago, we had a rally for Ukrainians. It was cold.

This time of year, it is cold in Chicago. It was probably 30 degrees, and the wind was blowing. But what a crowd showed up—several hundred people—many bearing Ukrainian flags and, of course, proud of their Ukrainian heritage, but from so many other places as well. Groups of people were there who were Indian Americans who wanted to show support.

I was proud that the Baltic Americans—Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians—once again were there in force. I was also proud that the Polish people came, because they have a special kinship to Ukraine at this moment in history.

Poland is accepting more refugees from Ukraine than any other nation and is making great personal sacrifice to do it.

As the Polish Ambassador told us 2 weeks ago, when people get off that train for the first stop in Poland, finally, they are on safe soil, out of Ukraine. They don't look for people—soldiers and police—to guide them. What they find is that people are in their cars, waiting, with the doors open, to bring them in even if they are total strangers.

The Polish Ambassador said: You don't see any refugee camps in Poland.

No. People are going into the homes of other Polish families and are being welcomed into those homes.

He said: The reason we are feeling this way about our neighbors is that, when it happened to us many years ago, no one would take us in. We remember those days.

What a reminder to us in the United States.

You know, when the President said last week that he wants to accept 100,000 refugees from Ukraine, I applauded it, as did others, but just for a point of reference, a nation of 5 million, known as Ireland, has also agreed to accept 100,000 refugees. So the United States is showing some charity, but we can do more. We shouldn't limit it just to refugees from Ukraine. There are refugees from wars and calamities around the world who also need an opportunity to be in a safe place. The United States has enjoyed that reputation for almost 80 years, and we did it after World War II. We should return to those days.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees calculates that 10 million Ukrainians—almost a fourth of the population—have been driven from their homes and displaced—1 out of 4. Another 3.5 million Ukrainians have fled to neighboring nations, especially to Poland. The city of Warsaw alone is admitting 1,000 Ukrainian children to its schools every day—1,000 Ukrainian kids a day into Poland.

Joe Biden, our President, understands the same truth that Madeleine Albright saw—that the struggle between dictatorships and democracy did not end with the defeat of Nazism or the fall of the Berlin Wall. It continues in this century, and Ukraine is now the new frontline in this old battle.

Critics of the President's will no doubt fixate on one unscripted line of his speech in Poland. I say to those critics: Who among you has not uttered the same thought? Who doubts for one second this world would be more secure without the likes of such a tyrant?

The Russian people have to make that decision, and if they are given the truth, I am sure they will make the right decision. That is why Vladimir Putin is trying to control the media. The Russian people will decide for themselves whether Putin stays or goes.

The duty of democracy is to make sure that people have the final word as to their own destinies within their own borders. President Biden is leading a historic effort of the NATO alliance on behalf of the people of Ukraine. I salute him for his leadership.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this morning, President Biden released his budget for fiscal year 2023.

When you compare the President's agenda with the nasty Republican proposals, like the one from the Senator from Florida, it is clear that the contrast between the two parties is stark and glaring. One budget is for the ultrarich, and the other budget is for the middle class and those working to get there.

President Biden's vision for America is refreshingly bold, responsible, and taps into our Nation's greatest strength—the American people themselves. It is a good, strong budget that will help build on the historic growth of the past year.

For starters, the President's budget zeros in on fighting inflation. It calls, for instance, on increasing domestic manufacturing and relieving supply chain bottlenecks, especially at our ports.

It increases help for American families to afford childcare, pre-K, and provides more funding to help schools with the academic and mental health resources to help students thrive.

It builds on the President's promise to expand healthcare and supports efforts to lower prescription drug costs. Lowering prescription drug costs is one of the highest priorities of Senate Democrats, and we are eager and ready to work with the administration on this front.

After years of Trump budgets that didn't even mention the word "climate," President Biden's plan would boost investments in clean energy, lower the costs of energy for low-income Americans, and speed up our transition to clean cars made right here in America, which will create thousands and thousands of good-paying new jobs.

Critically, the President's budget will grow our country while making sure the richest Americans pay their

fair share. Most Americans think it is unacceptable for those at the top to pay less in taxes than teachers and firefighters. God bless the rich—I have nothing against them—but I applaud the President's proposal for making sure the ultrarich chip in to growing our country.

Finally, I commend the President for releasing a budget that honors our Nation's promise to Ukraine while keeping Americans around the world safe from harm.

Now compare the President's budget, President Biden's budget, to the bewildering vision laid out by Senate Republicans in recent weeks.

While Democrats want to lower costs for American families, Republicans are openly calling on raising taxes on most Americans.

Yesterday, the junior Senator from Florida went on FOX News Sunday to deny this part of his plan, only for the anchor—the FOX anchor—to remind everyone watching: “No, it's in the plan.”

While Democrats want to strengthen Medicare and make healthcare more affordable, Republicans have resurrected calls to repeal healthcare and even possibly put Medicare on the chopping block. And lest anyone forget, a few months ago, the junior Senator from Florida, in another example, openly said inflation was a “gold mine”—a gold mine—for the Republican Party, a gold mine. People are hurt; it is a gold mine for the Republican Party.

Just how callous, how retrograde, how backward is the Republican vision for America? raising taxes on working people? cheerleading inflation? stoking divisions and even putting things like Medicare at risk while pushing tax breaks for the ultrarich? If that is their pitch to the American people, God help Republicans.

In the meantime, I thank President Biden for releasing a strong, optimistic, and responsible plan that will build on the historic recovery our Nation has seen in the past year.

Senate Democrats will work with the administration to put these proposals into concrete legislation in the weeks and months to come.

H.R. 4521

Madam President, now on the competition bill, it is an important day here on the Senate floor. In a few hours, we will hold a vote on final passage for the bipartisan jobs and competitiveness legislation many of us have worked on for over a year.

For the information of all, today's action will come in two steps. We will first vote on cloture on the substitute amendment, which contains the text of the Senate-passed United States Innovation and Competition Act. Then we will proceed to final passage. Both votes are set at a 60-vote threshold, and I am confident that we will wrap up this important work by the end of the day.

As I have said since the beginning of this process, the actions we are taking

on the Senate floor will enable us to enter a conference committee with the House, which we need in order to finalize our competitiveness bill. I believe we can see a conference committee initiated by the end of this work period.

If enacted, I believe this legislation will be one of the most important accomplishments of the 117th Congress. This bill, for all its provisions, is really about two big things: creating more American jobs and lowering costs for American families.

It will help lowering costs by making it easier to produce critical technologies here at home, like semiconductors. It will create more jobs by bringing manufacturing back from overseas.

And just as importantly, this legislation will fuel another generation of American innovation. Whichever nation is the first to master the technologies of tomorrow will reshape the world in its image. America cannot afford to come in second place when it comes to technologies like 5G, AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, bioengineering, and so much more.

This bill is a necessary step toward securing the bright future of American ingenuity, which has always helped us lead the way.

I want to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for everything they have done to help us each this moment. It has been a long, hard road, but almost every Member of this Chamber has had a hand in putting this bill together. It was a blend of various proposals across various committees, and it was a product of a healthy amendment process both in committee and on the floor.

We are, hopefully, just a few hours away from reaching the next important step in the process, putting us on a glidepath to initiating a conference committee with the House.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, on COVID, over the past few weeks, our country has made major strides in the fight against COVID. Cases, deaths, and hospitalizations are coming down and staying down. Schools and communities are opening up and staying open.

But in order to preserve this progress, Congress must now act to make sure that our communities, our healthcare workers, and our families have the resources they need to keep our country open. Sadly, public funding for COVID relief is in critical danger of actually running out.

That is why right now I am working with my Republican colleagues to reach a bipartisan agreement on another COVID-19 package. The White House has been unambiguous in saying they need more funding with all due haste, so that is what we are working to secure ASAP.

A new bipartisan bill will pay for all the tools we know work best against new variants: It will ensure we have enough vaccines; enough testing; enough therapeutics, which do amazing

things if you get them in time; and support our schools to stay open in a safe way. We also need to do more to boost global vaccination efforts and support cutting-edge research into new vaccines.

We already know what to do in order to keep life going as normally as possible should another variant threaten to unravel our progress. Now we simply need to secure the funding to make sure we can keep schools open and our communities as safe as possible. If you don't go for the funding and a new variant hits and it gets bad, shame on you. Everyone should be for this.

Over the next few days, we will keep negotiating with our Republican colleagues in good faith. While we are not there yet, talks have been encouraging, and I hope we can reach an agreement very soon.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 7108 and H.R. 6968

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand that there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6968) to prohibit the importation of energy products of the Russian Federation, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 7108) to suspend normal trade relations treatment for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar on the next legislative day.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you.
I yield the floor.

AMERICA CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANUFACTURING, PRE-EMINENCE IN TECHNOLOGY, AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH ACT OF 2022—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, during the first few months of President Biden's term, he has tried to brush off the surge of illegal immigrant apprehensions as nothing more than a seasonal trend. But after month 6, seasonal migration was no longer a valid explanation for what turned out to be a record-breaking year.

This border surge wasn't by accident. President Biden pledged to enact an open border agenda by halting border wall construction, reversing successful Trump-era immigration policies, and hamstringing our law enforcement officers. It was one promise he has kept.